A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LITERACY AND OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF SCHEDULED CASTE POPULATION IN BIRBHUM DISTRICT, WEST BENGAL

Research Proposal for the Registration in Ph.D. Program

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

RANCHI UNIVERSITY, RANCHI

2025

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Title of the Ph.D. Research Project: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LITERACY AND OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE OF SCHEDULED CASTE POPULATION IN BIRBHUM DISTICT, WEST BENGAL

Introduction: Education guides people in the right direction in their lives. It is the main driving force in making the individual's ideal and aware member of the society. There are variations in social justice and equality in different countries around the world. In India, justice and equality are recognized constitutionally, but in reality, social divisions exist in various forms based on gender and caste. In a developing country like India, important issues like educational inequality, economic inequality, and social inequality emerge in different ways across various state. India is home to people of diverse castes and religions. According to Article 366 (24) of the Constitution, people belonging to lower caste communities are known as Scheduled Castes (dopt.gov.in. n.d.). The Indian social system follows a hierarchical caste structure. A large portion, about 72 percent, of Scheduled Caste population in India live in rural areas, mainly in seven states: Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, and Rajasthan (section - 10: Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes - nirdpr, n.d.). There is a significant disparity in the average income level among people from upper castes, backward caste and Scheduled Castes and tribes. This gap stems from centuries of unequal treatment. About 16.6 percent of India's population belongs to Scheduled Castes. A vast majority of this population lacks personal wealth, land ownership, with around 71 percent working as farmers and agricultural laborers. Scheduled Castes and tribal population face extreme deprivation. (Raghavendra, 2020).

According to the directive principles of state policy in Article 46 of the Indian Constitution, says the government should take special steps to help Scheduled Castes and tribes. It states, "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the scheduled tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation" (Nic, L. P. n.d.)

India Scheduled Castes Population

India Scheduled Castes population	Percentage
India	16.63
West Bengal	23.51
Birbhum	21.60

Source: 1. (Handbook on SOCIAL WELFARE STATISTICS - Social Justice, 2018)
2. (SERIES- 20 PART XII- A - Westbengal.census.gov.in, 2011)

In India, 16.63 percent of the population belongs to the Scheduled Caste community, In West Bengal, this proportion 23.51 percent, while in Birbhum district, 21.60 percent of the population comprises Scheduled Caste individuals.

Education Rate of Schedule Caste Population

Education rate of Schedule caste population	Percentage
India	66.1
West Bengal	23.51
Birbhum	29.50

Source: 1. (Handbook on SOCIAL WELFARE STATISTICS - Social Justice, 2018)
2. (SERIES-20 PART XII-A - Westbengal.census.gov.in, 2011)

The following is the literacy rate of the Scheduled Caste in India: 66.1 percent of Scheduled Caste population in India are literate; 23.51 percent of Scheduled Caste population are literate in West Bengal state; and 29.50 percent of Scheduled Caste population are literate in Birbhum district of West Bengal State. Employment is necessary for human life. The main source of employment in Birbhum district West Bengal, are agriculture and small and medium scale industries. However, only a small portion of the Scheduled Caste population is engaged in these sectors.

According to NITI Aayog, some districts in the country are lag behind in terms of education, economic opportunities, employment, and infrastructure. Birbhum district is one of these districts. The districts with the largest of Scheduled Castes population in West Bengal include South 24 Parganas, Malda, Bankura, Birbhum, Cooch Behar, and East Burdwan.

The Scheduled Caste population in this district is employed as main workers, marginal workers and non-workers. A main worker is a person who works for at least 183 days a year, and a marginal worker is a person who works for less than 183 days a year. A non-worker is a person who is not engaged in any economic activity. According to the 2011 census in Birbhum district, 26.6 percent of the Scheduled Caste population are main workers, 11.96 percent are marginal workers and 61.98 percent are non-worker (S&M Volume 5: Population Censuses, n.d.)

In West Bengal Birbhum district is known as 'Rarh' and is also referred to as 'Vajjabhum'. It is bordered by Jharkhand in the north-west, Murshidabad in the east, and Burdwan in the south (*about District*, n.d.). As per the 2011 census, Birbhum district consists of three sub divisions (Suri, Bolpur, Rampurhat), 19 blocks, 18 police stations and 2455 villages. Birbhum district ranks 10^{th} in terms of Scheduled Castes population. In the present study, the data will be collect on literacy, occupational structure, and educational status, employment opportunities in the formal and informal sectors, social status and family income of the Scheduled Caste population of Birbhum district. The objectives is to examine the relationship between these factors and the socio economic condition of the Scheduled Caste community. This chapter will highlight the actual status of literacy and occupational structure among the Scheduled Caste population in Birbhum district.

Study area: Birbhum district of West Bengal was named after the dialect of the people living in the area. The word 'bir' means forest and 'bhum' means land. The name was Birbhum combining these two words. The district is located in the central-western part of West Bengal, bordered by: Santal Pargana (Jharkhand state) to the north and west, Murshidabad district to the east and Burdwan (present-day East and West Burdwan) districts to the south (SERIES-20 PART XII-A - Westbengal.census.gov.in, 2011). The geographical coordinates of the district are latitude between 23° 40′ 0″ north and 24° 20′ 0″ north and longitude between 87° 20′ 0″ east and 88° 0′ 0″ east (Location Map of Birbhum District, Download Scientific Diagram, n.d.). Birbhum district covers a total area of 4545 Square kilometer and is the seventh largest district in West Bengal terms of area. The major rivers, in this district are Ajoy, Bakreswar, Mayurakshi and Bramhani, Hingla River, Kopai River. The Ajoy River, which originates from the Chotanagpur plateau in Jharkhand, plays important rolein the region's watr system. The soft alluvial soil of these rivers supports agriculture in the district. The soil of this district is mainly laterite, which has low fertility. The forest cover in the district 3.5 percent. This district is administratively divided into three sub divisions, 19 blocks, 18 police stations, 19 Panchayat Samities, 169 Gram Panchayats and 2455 villages. Birbhum district has a strong agro-based industrial sector. (SERIES-20 PART XII-A - Westbengal.census.gov.in, 2011)

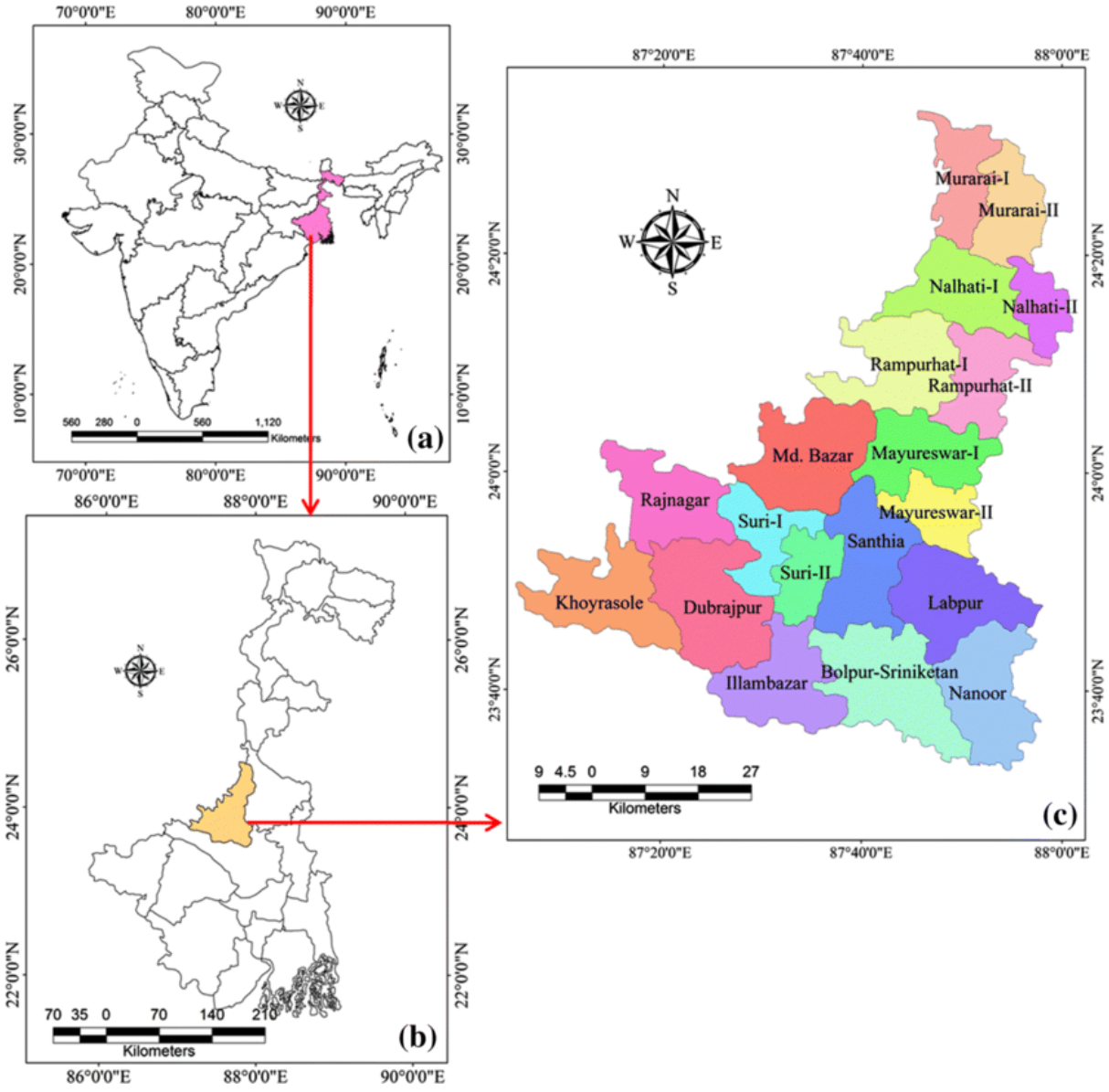

Figure. 1: **Location map of a India, b West Bengal and c study area: Birbhum district**

Source: (*Location Map of a India, B West Bengal and C Birbhum District | Download Scientific Diagram*, n.d.)

State-of-the-Art:

The Birbhum district in West Bengal has a landscape manly made of rocky, less fertile, and clayey soil, though some river areas have fertile soil. The economy here mostly depends on agriculture along with small and medium scale industries. When examining literacy rates and employment among different groups, the Scheduled Castes have lower literacy rates compared to the district average. The primarily work in unorganized sectors such as agriculture and daily wage labor. The literacy rate among Scheduled Castes is lower than that of the general community, and there's a significant gap between rural and urban areas in terms of literacy rates. The main reasons for the low literacy rates among Scheduled Castes include social and economic barriers insufficient school, poor infrastructure, high dropout rates, and a lack of government and privet initiatives, Due to their low income, the Scheduled Caste community struggle to get quality education and access to organized employment, leaving them behind socially and economically. Even today, they face discrimination, which affecting their wages, literacy rates and employment opportunities. To overcome these challenges, more research and awareness are needed.

Mendelsohn & Vicziany (1998) This paper highlighted that the Scheduled Castes of India were restricted to decent wage, organized and unorganized work due to social deprivation and untouchability. These castes mainly work in manual scavenging, agricultural labor, leather industry, etc.

Galanter (1984) & Weskopf (2004) This paper highlighted the reservation policies in India. The use of reservation policies in education and employment is discussed.

Kingdon (2007) & Tilak (2008) In this research paper, observe disparity in educational and employment progress between Scheduled Castes and other social groups in India, citing poverty and social inequality as the reasons.

Chauhan (2008) According to research paper that analyzes the policy of reservation for lower castes in India, This paper mentions factors relevant to low school enrollment and completion rates, including drop out. The paper also highlights social, educational and political issues related to the policy of conservation and suggests that conservation should be based on economic criteria rather than ethnic considerations.

Thorot (2009) & Patriot (2011) In this study have highlighted the historically socio-economic marginalization of Scheduled Castes in India, citing the caste system as cause. Scheduled caste have been primarily deprived of access to education, employment and use of resources.

Thorat & Newman (2010) This paper highlighted that India's economic reforms and reservation policies have paved the way for educational and employment progress among Scheduled Castes, although there are challenges in their proper implementation.

Kumar & Sharma (2016) This paper analyzes that although the reservation policy in the government has given the Scheduled Castes some opportunities to get jobs, their participation rate in higher positions is comparatively low.

Deshpande (2017) This paper highlighted that the participation rate in the unorganized sector is high among the Scheduled Castes in India, which results in them being deprived of fair wages, stable employment, and social and health opportunities.

Roy, et.al. (2018) According to the research paper is on General, Scheduled Castes and scheduled Tribes women's literacy rates, employment rates, and gender disparities. Census data and secondary data from 2001-2011 have been used for this study.

Ahmad & Bano (2018) According to the research paper, analyzes the occupational status of Scheduled Castes and general population in India. Data for this study has been collected from Census of India 2011 and District Census Handbook. This paper points out that the scheduled caste population in marginal areas in India lags far behind in terms of occupational status. Lack of land, illiteracy, lack of skills have been cited as reasons for the occupational backwardness of the scheduled caste population. Scheduled Caste people also work for low wages due to unemployment, poverty, landless and homelessness.

ILO (2018) In this reports that caste-based discrimination in India affects wages, employment opportunities, social and economic barriers and job security of Scheduled Castes. The proper implementation of reservation policies and labour laws is needed to address this inequality.

Acharya and Sahoo (2019) According to the research, paper it highlight on the changing trends in literacy among the Scheduled Caste population in India. This study uses data from India's Census and the National Sample Survey. India has observed an increasing trend in the literacy rate of Scheduled Castes, but failure in examinations and poor socio-economic status in higher education are the main reasons. Despite various efforts by the central and state governments, the gaps in the proper development of social groups are yet to be filled.

Raghavendra (2020) According to the research, paper highlight on the literacy and health status of Scheduled Castes in India. It has been mentioned Scheduled Castes in India are noted to be socially backward compared to other castes. This paper has collected secondary data and collected health-related data from the National Family Health Survey-2015-2016. The survey depicts the literacy status, sex ratio, different health-related elements of scheduled caste people.

Bardhan (2002) This paper focuses on the land structure in West Bengal. The study highlighted that the Scheduled Castes mostly work as landless cultivators. The Scheduled Castes face economic constraints due to lack of land.

Sengupta & Guha (2014) This paper analyses the employment structure in West Bengal, which shows that the majority of Scheduled Castes in West Bengal work as unorganized labourers, which leads to low standard of living due to deprivation of social and economic opportunities.

Bose (2019) In this paper, an assessment of skill development activities in West Bengal has shown that the Scheduled Caste youth face obstacles in terms of job opportunities and training in the unorganized sector. Due to the low literacy rate among the Scheduled Castes in West Bengal, they are deprived of high-income job opportunities

Banerjee (2020) This paper analyses the impact of the Government of West Bengal's MGNREGA scheme and the analysis shows that the participation rate of Scheduled Castes in government schemes is lower than that of the general castes. There is a lack of awareness and administrative complexity for implementing these schemes.

Barman & Chouhan (2017) According to the research paper, focuses on the literacy and gender inequality of the Scheduled Caste population in the state of West Bengal in India. According to research data, the literacy rate is 73.56%, the male literacy rate is 80.67% and the female literacy rate is 58.04%. This study uses a standard score (z-score related to usage) and maps and cartographic methods with the help of GIS software.

Chatterjee (1991) According to the research paper highlights the issues of poverty, inequality and agricultural labor of migrant workers in Birbhum district. Apart from this, malnutrition, unemployment, low wages, and land inequality have been mentioned in the district. In this district, 41 percent of Scheduled Caste and tribal people work as agricultural laborers.

West Bengal Human Development Report (2004, 2010) This report mentions that the literacy rate of Scheduled Castes in rural areas is low, citing the lack of schools, school infrastructure, social and economic barriers as the reasons for which they are deprived of educational opportunities.

District Census Handbook, Birbhum (2011) This report mentions that the literacy rate of Birbhum district is lower than the average literacy rate of the district. In addition, the literacy rate of Scheduled Castes and women in the district is low, which can be seen in the inequality in terms of access to education**.**

Research Problem: The main Research problem as follows.

1. The literacy rate of Scheduled Castes in Birbhum district is low due to educational Discrimination.
2. Poverty and financial limitation are significant barriers to education for these Communities.
3. Low wages in the unorganized sector create obstacles to social and economic progress.
4. Due to limited access to government employment, the pace of economic and social Development of Scheduled Castes is slow.
5. Caste-based and gender-based discrimination is observed in educational and employment Sector.
6. Due to the lack of proper implementation of government projects, the development of Scheduled Castes people is far behind.

Research Question: The Primary Research question are listed below.

1. How does the literacy rate of Scheduled Caste population in Birbhum district compare to Literacy rates at the national and state level?
2. To what extent do the socio economic factors of Birbhum district influence the literacy rate and occupational structure of the Scheduled Caste population?
3. What are the variations in literacy rates and occupational structure among different Sub-groups of Scheduled Caste population in Birbhum district, and what factor contribute to these variations?
4. What impact have been schemes implemented by the central and state governments had on the literacy rate and occupational structure of the Scheduled Caste population in Birbhum district?
5. What is the relationship between the literacy rate and occupational choices among the Scheduled Caste population in Birbhum district?

Objective of the investigation and motivation: Major objectives of the study are follows:-

1. To study the literacy status of Scheduled Castes population in study area.
2. To examine the occupational structure of Scheduled Castes population in study area.
3. To evaluate the relationship between literacy with occupation, income, number of birth, monthly income, monthly expenditure, health status, and social mobility.
4. To assess the relationship of age group, literacy level, income category and level, number of birth, family size, family structure, monthly income, monthly expenditure, health status, and social mobility with occupation.
5. To examine the relationship of literacy status with age group, occupation, and income.
6. To identify the factors influencing the literacy level of Scheduled Castes.
7. Suggestion on improving the literacy and employment prospects of Scheduled Castes.

Research Hypothesis: The researcher in this study has made the following hypothesis

Null and Alternative Hypothesis (H0: Hi):-

1. Ho: There is a no significant difference in Scheduled Caste Literacy rates across different Blocks of Birbhum district.
   Hi: There is a significant difference in Scheduled Caste Literacy rates across different Blocks of Birbhum district.
2. Ho: Scheduled Caste occupational Structure does not vary across different Blocks of Birbhum district.
   Hi: Scheduled Caste occupational Structure do varies significantly across Blocks of Birbhum district.
3. Ho: Literacy has no impact on Occupation, Income and Socio-economic mobility.
   Hi: Literacy significantly impacts occupation, income and socio-economic mobility.
4. Ho: There is no significant relation between Literacy Level and unorganized Sector in Birbhum district.
   Hi: There is a significant relation between Literacy Level and unorganized Sector in Birbhum district

Research Design and Methodology: The researcher's study will be based on Descriptive Research design, whereby the researcher aims to describe more elaborately and extensively the important points of the area and its elements. This study will use quantitative method to get a broad understanding of the literacy level and occupational structure of the Scheduled Caste population of Birbhum district.

a. Tentative chapter Plan: The present study is organized in Eight Chapters.

Introduction

Chapter-I: **Geographical Environment.**

Chapter-II: **Population Growth, Distribution and Composition.**

Chapter-III: **Measurement of Socio-Economic Attributes of Scheduled Caste Population**.

Chapter-IV: **Spatial-Temporal Analysis of Literacy.**

Chapter-V: **Occupational Structure of Scheduled Caste Population.**

Chapter-VI: **Comparative Analysis of Literacy and Occupational Structure.**

Chapter-VII: **Government Initiatives and Plan Implementation for Scheduled Caste Population**.

Chapter-VIII: **Planning for Development of Scheduled Castes Literacy and Occupational Structure.**

Conclusion

Bibliography

Appendix

Sources of data and Tools to be used in Collection of Data:

Source of data: The present study is based on primary and secondary Data.

a) **Primary Data:** Data can be obtained from household Survey through a questionnaire.

b) **Secondary Data:** Data can be obtained from secondary sources like government reports (Census of India, District Statistical Handbook, Historical Records, Books, Reports, Articles, Journals, and Documents from various sources).

Sampling technique and Sample Size: A research study is being conducted in the Birbhum district, which is divided into 3 sub division Suri Sadar, Bolpur and Rampurhat. This district comprises 19 Community Development Blocks. From these, 3 blocks from each Sub-division have been chosen, totaling 9 blocks. The selection criterion for these Blocks is based on the higher density of the Scheduled Caste Population. From each selected Blocks, 4 Villages have been chosen, resulting in a total of 36 Villages. The Selection criterion for these villages is based on literacy rate.

The researcher has used purposive sampling to select both the Blocks and Villages. After selecting the village, Simple Random Samplings used to select 10 respondents from each village, resulting in a total of 360 respondents. Data will be collected through face to face village surveys with the selected respondents. The researcher will conduct structure interviews using a set of predefined question. The sample will be drawn from the Scheduled Caste population, which balances statistical significance and practical feasibility.

Tools and techniques Data Collection:

Quantitative Data: Conduct a survey to collect quantitative data on the place of residence, social mobility, age group, marital status, literacy level, type and status of occupation, income category, order of birth, household size, household system, type of house, caste-based discrimination, monthly expenditure, health status, working hours, social mobility, payment method, expectations for the future, assets, particularly focusing on the Scheduled Castes.

Analysis of data: Appropriate statistical tools will be used to analyze the results and properly interpret them at the end of the study.

A) **Descriptive analysis:** Graphical representation of data through Mean, Median, Mode, and Standard deviation charts, graphs and tables.
B) **Inferential analysis**: Various statistical tests including ANOVA and Z tests, will be conducted using SPSS software to analyze the data and draw conclusions about the population.

Significance of the study: The study will help in understanding the literacy and occupational structure problems of the Scheduled Caste population in Birbhum district. Development of a developing country like India requires the full participation of the Scheduled Caste population with knowledge, skills, and confidence. Education is one of the most important factors in the empowerment of Scheduled Castes. The Scheduled Castes are far behind in terms of education and employment compared with other communities in India. The research will help in creating awareness about the literacy and occupational structure needs of the Scheduled Castes, especially the education of the Scheduled Castes, which will enhance the progress of the country.

This study will highlight the literacy and occupational structure problems of Scheduled Castes in Birbhum district and help the concerned authorities to solve the problems. This study will help the government and social workers understand the problems of the Scheduled Caste population, thereby motivating them to work in the fields of education and employment for Scheduled Castes.

Its relevance to the present day problem and need to the society: In India, the enrollment and education rates of Scheduled Caste lag behind those of other sections of society. Scheduled Castes in India pre-independence and 75th anniversary of Independence Azadi Ka Amrita Mohotsav, especially for Scheduled Castes, do not observe any significant change in education rate. According to data from the Government of India and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Caste are among the poorest, most deprived of social status, deprived of quality education, economically vulnerable and politically marginalized groups. Low levels of education are the main factor hindering the development of Scheduled Castes in Birbhum district, due to which they are deprived of real rights. Due to the low level of education of this category of community, they work in the informal sector, mainly as day laborers in the agricultural sector, resulting in a much lower family income than other communities. Scheduled Castes are one of the most vulnerable and exploited sections of society. Scheduled Caste population, especially in Birbhum district, are major obstacles to progress in their lives due to a lack of literacy, and occupational structure and jobs in the informal sector.

Contribution to the existing knowledge: As mentioned earlier, the present study was conducted to explore the potential impact on literacy and occupational structure of Scheduled Caste people in Birbhum district. The data obtained from this survey will focus on geographical aspects such as literacy and employment in the occupational sector of the Scheduled Castes of the district, as well as social justice, economic justice and political justice of the Scheduled Castes for the welfare of the backward sections of the society for planners and policy makers.

The educational status and socio-economic status of the SC and ST population in Birbhum district of West Bengal is much lower than that of the general caste. (Ghosh, 2019). The Scheduled Castes of West Bengal are relatively backward in occupational, educational and other fields. There is a difference in education rates of Scheduled Caste males and females. (Dutta & Bisai 2020). Due to their very low literacy rate, people of Scheduled Castes people are deprived of constitutional rights, which is a major hindrance to development and will help in formulating appropriate policies. The main source of the livelihood for the Scheduled Castes is agriculture and sericulture.

These livelihoods are very important and critical to their survival (Roy & Mondal, 2015). The present research work will be the first of its kind. So, we need more research to find out the real problems facing this population. Through the data obtained from this survey, the socio-economic status, lack of own land, educational status, work participation rate, employment status, occupational structure, formal and informal sector work problems of the Scheduled Caste people of Birbhum district have been identified.

Future work: Current studies have shown an impact on education, health, occupation, income, old age pension, social security, family status, social status of Scheduled Castes and tribes, women's empowerment. For an example, if Scheduled Caste family is educationally, economically weak, lacks suitable employment and income level is low, then the effects of education as well as health among the children of the family will be observed, but economic weakness will be more visible.

Major topics for future research are to explore the causes of malnutrition and early marriage among scheduled caste women in Birbhum district, to conduct a study on the impact of education on decision-making tendencies of women in rural areas of Birbhum district. To do, some such reports have been published in previous studies. In the highlight of the present study, future researchers will come up with newer research.

1. A study may also be conducted to determine social security and health rights for migrant workers in Birbhum district.
2. A study may also be conducted to determine status of female employment of Birbhum.
3. A study may also be conducted to determine occupational and health conditions of rural working women of Birbhum.
4. A study may also be conducted to determine the relationship between Health status according to age, education, occupation, and income.

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